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EXPOSITION
OF THE
Athanasian Creed.

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EXPOSITION



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A

SHORT AND SIMPLE

EXPOSITION

OF THE

Athanasius, Saint &c
R ATHANASIAN CREED,

TENDING TO REMOVE

THE USUAL PREJUDICES AGAINST IT.

BY

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ATTEMPT

TO

RENDER THE DAILY READING

OF THE

PSALMS

MORE INTELLIGIBLE TO THE UNLEARNED.

with

A Paraphrase

selected from the best commentators,

and

ILLUSTRATED

WITH OCCASIONAL NOTES.

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THE
INTRODUCTION

THE following pages were written some years since, partly to satisfy the writer's own mind, and partly to ease the scruples of a friend. Some partial friends, having accidentally seen them, were pleased to think, that the simplicity of the explanation might be of more general use, and not wholly unworthy of the public eye.

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THE INTRODUCTION.

IN this age of free inquiry, when the mysteries of religion are pried into with a curious eye, and when the pride of human reason will not permit its votaries to believe even the revealed word of God, unless it be exactly suited to their crude and imperfect conceptions; it is the less surprising that the Athanasian Creed should meet with much opposition and objection. The various Dissenters from the Church of England, however they may differ from each other in points of faith, are almost universally agreed in opposing this Creed. The common objections against it, both from them and others, are grounded upon what are called the *damnatory clauses*: nor is this all; for even the doctrine of the Trinity itself, though so clearly deducible from Scrip-
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ture,

ture, is frequently called in question by those, who affect a superior degree of wisdom and knowledge. But, surely, it is impossible to read the Gospel of St. John with an unprejudiced attention, and not be convinced of the mysterious existence of the ever-blessed Trinity.

It is true, that the notion of a Trinity in Unity, or of three persons in the Godhead, is beyond the reach of our finite understandings; *such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for us, we cannot attain unto it.* But can we comprehend how the Divine Presence fills every part of space? How the power of God created, and his Providence superintends, the vast structure of the Universe and all things contained in it? Nay, can we conceive how we ourselves, or the meanest insects upon earth, are formed, animated, and sustained in life? Can we explain the wonderful union of our souls and bodies, and that intimate connection between them, so that whatever affects the one has an effect also upon the other? If we must plead ignorance in these and a thousand other points, surely it would be but common modesty to humble our minds to the belief of the scriptural

tural doctrine of the Trinity, though we cannot accurately define the nature of it.

With respect to the Athanasian Creed, it must be allowed, that it is not unfrequently objected to by some of the members of our Church, who constantly attend her services, and who, while they join in the repetition of this Creed, secretly wish, that it did not make a part of the Common-Prayer Book. Possibly, the service of the Church would receive no material injury, if it were entirely omitted; and as far as such an omission relieved the scruples of tender consciences, it might on that account be desirable.

But as the case now stands, it is enjoined by authority to be read publicly several times in the year; and therefore it is of importance to consider, whether the several clauses of it are so exceptionable as they are sometimes apprehended to be. By allowing them a candid and impartial interpretation, free from any bigotted attachment to the Creed, on one hand, and without any undue prejudice against it, on the other, it will perhaps appear, that nothing is advanced in this Creed but what may be fully

proved, or at least be fairly inferred, from Scripture.

It is by no means the intention of these few pages, to enter into any controversy concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, or the absolute necessity of retaining the Athanasian Creed: such disputes seldom convince either party, and on points far beyond our comprehension, it is a good maxim, *not to be wise above that which is written.*

It always struck the writer, that the clauses most objected to in the Creed, when taken in connection with what precedes and follows them, were capable of a clear and simple interpretation, and were conformable to the general tenour of the Scriptures. He has therefore subjoined to each verse of the Creed a short and plain paraphrase, expressive, he conceives, of the genuine sense of it, and confirmed by such passages of Scripture as most readily occurred; without presuming to suppose, that many, equally apposite, might not be produced for the same purpose. Such parts of this Creed as are merely illustrative, and are clearly to be deduced from the general doctrine do not seem

to

to require, nor indeed to admit, many particular proofs.

It may be proper to add, that no particular author has been followed or consulted in this illustration; so that the faults to be found in it must be charged upon the writer only: whoever is desirous of seeing the subject fully and ably discussed, must consult the works of Rotheram.

THE
CREED
OF
Saint ATHANASIUS.

*WHOEVER will be saved, before all things
it is necessary that he hold the catholick faith.*

Whoever is desirous of obtaining that eternal salvation, which is the hope, and will be the reward, of every sincere Christian; it is necessary, in the first place, that he profess and hold fast that universal faith in the Divine Being, his attributes and revealed will, which is the distinguishing mark of a true believer in Christ.

JOHN vi. 47.—He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.

Heb. xi. 6.—Without faith it is impossible to please God—

Rom. x. 10. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Heb. X. 39.—We are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe, to the saving of the soul.

Which faith, except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.

And it is of the utmost importance to preserve this faith pure and uncorrupted; since either the want of faith, or the extreme corruption of it, will subject us to the doom of eternal punishment.

And the catholick faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity.

Now a very essential part of that catholick or universal faith, which is required of every Christian, is this; that we acknowledge and adore one God in three persons, and three persons in that one God.

Mark xvi. 16. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.

2. Theff. ii. 12. That they all might be damned, who believed not the truth.—

Eph. iv. 5. One Lord, one faith—

2. Pet. ii. 1. But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

1. Cor. viii. 4.—There is none other God but one.

Gen. i. 26. And God said, let us make man in our image.

Matt. xxviii. 19. Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

1. John v. 7. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

Neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance.

As far as our limited faculties will permit, we must endeavour not to confound the three persons of the Trinity, nor yet to divide the essence of the Deity, so as to make three distinct Gods.

For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost.

For God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost are to be considered as three distinct persons in the Trinity.

John xiv. 16. I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter——

Mark xii. 29.—The Lord our God is one Lord.

2. Cor. xiii. 14. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.

Eph. ii. 18. For through Him we both have an access by one Spirit unto the Father.

But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one; the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal.

But these three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, have all one and the same Divinity, the same equal degree of glory, the same eternal majesty.

Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost.

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, have all the same Godhead.

Mark xii. 32.—For there is one God, and there is none other but He.

Heb. i. 3. Who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power—

Col. ii. 9.—In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

John xvi. 15. All things that the Father hath, are mine—

Acts v. 3, 4.—Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?—Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

1. Cor. ii. 11.—Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

Heb. i. 1. God—spake in time past unto the prophets.

2. Pet. i. 21. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate, and the Holy Ghost uncreate.

They are all three equally uncreated Beings.

The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, the Holy Ghost incomprehensible.

They are all three of so divine and exalted a nature, as to be equally above all human comprehension.

Gen. i. 1. In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*.

John viii. 58.—Before Abraham was, I am.

Col. i. 16.—All things were created by Him.

Gen. i. 2. The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters†.

Job xi. 7. Canst thou by searching find out God?—

Matt. xi. 27.—No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son—

John iii. 8.—So is every one that is born of the Spirit.

* It is a remark of some importance, that, throughout the whole account of the creation, Moses does not use the word *Jehovah, God*, in the singular number, but *Elohim, Gods*, in the plural.—† As the universe was created by the Divine Power, it may be inferred, that the Deity Himself existed prior to all creation.

The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal.

They are all three equally of an eternal and infinite duration.

And yet they are not three eternals, but one eternal.

Nevertheless, they all three constitute only one Deity.

So also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated; but one uncreated, and one incomprehensible.

In like manner, when we speak of their being each of them separately incomprehensible and uncreated, we still bear in mind the Unity of the Godhead; though human language and human ideas must fall short on so sublime and mysterious a subject.

Pfalm xc. 2.—Thou art God from everlasting, and world without end.

John i. 2. The same was in the beginning with God.

— xvii. 24.—Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

Heb. i. 8. But unto the Son he saith, thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever—

Col. i. 17. He is before all things, and by him all things consist.

1. Cor. xii. 6. It is the same God which worketh all in all.

Heb. ix. 14.—Through the eternal Spirit—

So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Ghost Almighty.

Thus, too, the attribute of Omnipotence belongs to all the three persons of the Godhead.

And yet they are not three Almighties, but one Almighty.

Nevertheless, they all together make but one Almighty Being.

Rev. xix. 6.—The Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

Rev. i. 8. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, faith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

John vi. 40.—I will raise him up at the last day.

— xvi. 13.—He will shew you things to come.

1. Cor. xii. 11. All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God.

So likewise each of the three persons is individually God.

And yet they are not three Gods, but one God.

Notwithstanding, they all together make but one God.

Rom. xv. 6.—Glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Cor. viii. 4.—There is none other God but one.

John i. 1.—The Word was God.

Matt. ix. 6.—The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins—

Luke v. 21.—Who can forgive sins but God alone?

Rom. ix. 5.—Christ, who is over all, God blessed for ever*—

Acts vii. 59.—Lord Jesus, receive my Spirit.

—ix. 34. Jesus Christ maketh thee whole—

Matt. xii. 31.—Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.

Luke i. 35.—The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.

1. Cor. xii. 6. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

* It is well known, that the omission of 1. John v. 7. in some MSS. and ancient versions, has occasioned its authenticity to be called in question, though, at the same time, the proofs of its being spurious are by no means conclusive. But admitting some doubts with respect to that celebrated verse, it is worthy of remark, that no various readings of importance are to be found in any of the MSS. of John i. 1. and Rom. ix. 5. which so strongly prove the Divinity of Christ.

So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord.

So also each of the three persons is individually Lord.

And yet not three Lords, but one Lord.

But all of them together constitute only one Lord.

For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every person by himself to be God and Lord ;

For as the truth of the Christian religion obliges us to confess, that each of the three persons in the Trinity is separately and individually God and Lord ;

So are we forbidden by the Catholick religion, to say, there be three Gods, or three Lords.

So does it also forbid our saying, that there are three Gods, or three Lords.

Matt. xi. 25.—I thank thee, O Father, Lord
of heaven and earth—

Phil. ii. 11.—Every tongue should confess,
that Jesus Christ is Lord—

Acts v. 9.—Ye have agreed together to tempt
the Spirit of the Lord—

Eph. iv. 5. One Lord, one faith—

This has been proved before.

The Father is made of none, neither created, nor begotten.

The Father is self-existent, and does not owe his being to any preceding cause.

The Son is of the Father alone, not made, nor created, but begotten.

The Son, though God himself, must in some sort be said to be of the Father, and of Him only; but his existence bears no resemblance to that of any creature; He is spoken of in Scripture as the only-begotten of God, a term implying the closest connection and equality with God.

The Holy Ghost is of the Father, and of the Son; neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.

The Holy Ghost does not owe his existence to any mode of creation, nor is he begotten, like the Son; but he proceeds from the Father and the Son, in a wonderful and inconceivable manner.

Ifai. xlv. 6.—I am the first, and I am the last, and besides me there is no God.

—— 24.—I am the Lord that maketh all things.

John i. 14.—We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father——

—— 18.—The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father.

—— xiv. 11. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me.

Heb. i. 5.—Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee——

John xiv. 26.—The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name——

—— xvi. 7.—If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

—— xx. 22.—He breathed on them, and saith unto them, receive ye the Holy Ghost.

So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts.

So, then, it plainly appears, that there are not in the Godhead three Fathers, three Sons, nor three Holy Ghosts; but one Father, one Son, and one Holy Ghost.

And in this Trinity none is afore, or after other; none is greater, or less than another.

And in this Trinity of persons, neither of them has any precedence over the other, either in point of duration or superiority.

But the whole three persons are co-eternal together and co-equal.

But they have all three the same eternity and equality.

So that in all things, as is aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped.

Wherefore, as was said before, we must acknowledge and adore one God in three persons, and three persons in one God.

Eph. iv. 6. One God and Father of all——

John iii. 16.—God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son——

1. Cor. xii. 4.—There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

John xvi. 13. Howbeit, when He the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

—— 14. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

—— 15. All things that the Father hath, are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

—— xvii. 5. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was*.

* These passages, if closely attended to, seem clearly to point out the distinct personality and equality of power in the three persons of the Trinity, as well as their concurrence and harmony in the divine dispensations towards mankind.

He therefore that will be saved, must thus think of the Trinity.

Whosoever, therefore, is desirous of obtaining eternal salvation, he must form his faith and his practice by the revealed will of God: and in particular, he must endeavour to impress upon his mind such just ideas of the Holy Trinity, as are warranted by Scripture; namely, as of one God in three persons, and three persons in one God.

Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation, that he also believe rightly the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Another object of faith, which is essentially necessary to eternal salvation, is a firm belief in the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh.

If the existence of three persons in the Godhead be a doctrine proved from Scripture, and the Scripture be allowed to be the revealed word of God, this consequence must follow, that the belief of such a doctrine is *necessary to Salvation*.

Matt. i. 23. Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted, is, God with us.

John i. 14. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us——

For the right faith is, that we believe, and confess, that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man.

For, in order to obtain a right faith in this mysterious doctrine, we must firmly believe and openly profess, that our Lord Jesus Christ, though he be the Son of God, is compounded of a divine and human nature.

God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and Man, of the substance of his Mother, born in the world.

We must believe, that he is God, of the same substance as the Father, and existing before the universe; and we must also believe, that he is Man, of the same substance as his Virgin-mother, and born as other human creatures are.

Perfect God, and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting.

That, notwithstanding his compound nature, He continues completely God; and is also completely Man, consisting of a rational soul and a human body of flesh.

Rom. ix. 5.—Christ, who is over all, God blessed for ever.

— x. 9.—If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

1. Tim. ii. 5.—One mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

John i. 1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

— xvii. 24.—Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

Gal. iv. 4.—When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman—

Phil. ii. 6. Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

— 7.—But was made in the likeness of men.

John xx. 28. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord, and my God.

*Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead;
and inferior to the Father, as touching his Manhood.*

With respect to his divine nature, He is equal to God the Father; but inferior to Him, with respect to his human nature.

Who, although he be God and Man, yet he is not two, but one Christ.

Although he is compounded both of the divine and human natures, yet he is altogether only one Christ, or anointed Saviour.

One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the Manhood into God.

And this union of the two natures is not effected by absorbing the divine nature, or by converting it into the human, but by the accession of the human nature to the divine.

John x. 30. I and my Father are one.

—— 38.—— That ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in Him.

—— xiv. 28.—— My Father is greater than I.

Acts xx. 28.—— The church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

1. Tim. ii. 5.—— There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

—— iii. 16.—— Great is the mystery of Godliness; God was manifest in the flesh——

Heb. ii. 14. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same.

—— 16. For verily he took not, on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham.

One altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person.

So that the two natures, taken together, make one individual person, without any confusion or mixture of the divine and human substance.

For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and Man is one Christ.

For the union of the divine and human natures in Christ may be illustrated by the union of the rational soul and the body in man: and the nature of both these unions is so mysterious and inconceivable, that we can form almost as clear ideas of the one as of the other.

Who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead.

We must also firmly believe, that Jesus Christ submitted to the death of the cross, to redeem us from the punishment due to our sins; that when he died, his soul was conveyed to the place allotted to departed spirits; and that, on the third day after his death, he rose again from the dead.

Luke xxiv. 46.—Thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.

1. Cor. xv. 3.—Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

Acts. ii. 31. He seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.

He ascended into heaven, he sitteth on the right hand of the Father, God Almighty, from whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

After forty days continuance upon earth, he ascended visibly into heaven, where he will remain in full majesty and power, till he shall once more descend at the day of general judgement.

At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies, and shall give account for their own works.

At which great day there shall be a general resurrection of all mankind, who shall rise again with the same bodies in which they lived, and shall give a strict account of their lives.

And they that have done good, shall go into life everlasting; and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire.

And they, who have lived good lives, in obedience to God's laws, shall be rewarded with eternal life: but they, who have lived wicked lives, and have not repented of their evil deeds, shall be punished with eternal fire.

Acts i. 9.—While they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight.

Eph. i. 20.—He raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.

2. Tim. iv. 1.—The Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing.

Rom. viii. 11.—He that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies—

—xiv. 12. So then, every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

2. Cor. v. 10. For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, whether it be good or bad.

John v. 28.—The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,

—29. And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

This is the Catholick faith, which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved.

This, then, is the catholick or universal faith concerning the three persons in the Holy Trinity, which, as far as it is warranted by Scripture, every man, who desires to obtain eternal salvation, must faithfully believe.

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FINIS.

Gal. i. 8.—Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

Jude 3.—That ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints,

Gal. i. 8.—Though we or an angel from
heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that
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7 AP 66

Jude 3.—That ye should earnestly contend
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